Sacred Journey

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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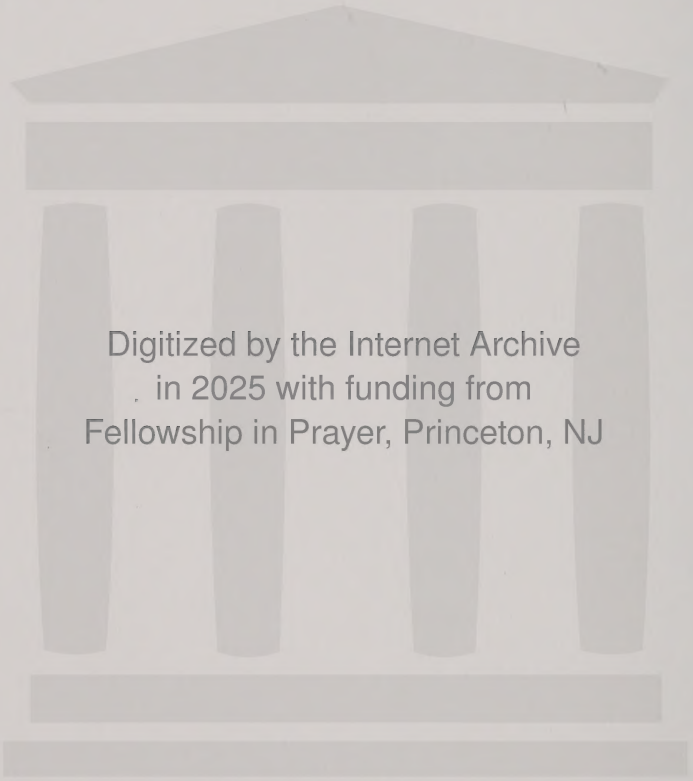
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SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Fellowship in Prayer

encourages and supports
a spiritual orientation to life,

promotes the practice
of prayer, meditation,
and service to others,

and helps bring about
a deeper spirit of unity
among humankind.

SACRED JOURNEY
THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
Summer 2009, vol. 60, no. 3

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We welcome submissions of articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience and practice, religious faith or similar topics, as well as prayers and poetry. We look for writing that expresses an individual's personal experience while also conveying a deeper message of universal appeal. Writing must be accessible to people of all traditions. Please include a brief biography and full contact information: name, address, phone numbers and email. Articles should not exceed 1500 words and may be submitted to the editor via mail or preferably by email at submissions@sacredjourney.org

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Who's Who?

JANET M. HAAG

Living with someone who spent significant time in a monastery before he became my husband has provided me with a steady stream of "stories from the monastery"—some touching, some funny, but always wisdom-laden. Perhaps, the fruit of daily contemplation includes an uncanny ability to cut to the chase. At least I think that might be so when I hear stories like the following.

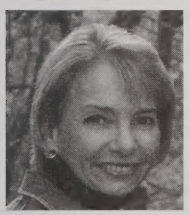
In Roman Catholic monasteries, one monk is assigned to be the *hebdomadarian,* prayer leader, for community vespers, usually for a week at a time. He has the responsibility of selecting spiritual reading for the services to complement the scriptures and recitation of the psalms. Some years ago, Brother Rupert decided to read from a contemporary book entitled, *Tell Me Who I Am* by Adrian Van Kaam and Susan Muto. One elderly German monk in the community found it particularly irritating to listen to the phrase "*Tell Me Who I Am*—Susan Muto" repeated day after day. Finally, he could take it no longer. In the middle of choir one afternoon, he loudly announced, "Ack . . . I am Brother Heinrich! You are Brother Rupert! Who is this Susan Muto?" Needless to say, the monks were amused. While Brother Heinrich's frustration does not reflect the spiritual wisdom of the referenced text, his comments nonetheless give us pause. Can anyone else ever tell me who I am? Or through my relationships with others, do they raise the question which I must answer for myself? And how important is it then for me to find out about others whom I don't know? It is so simple and yet, so profound!

There is a long-standing debate over whether nature or nurture has the greater influence on human development and points favoring either side can be raised ad infinitum. However, both are critical in our unfolding and each one of us makes choices that shape the person each of us becomes. In some religious traditions, life's task is to discern the will of God, to discover the *Imago Dei*—the im-

age of God imprinted on our souls. For others, it is the quest for the True Self or the reality of No-Self. Still others will say that if we "follow our bliss," we will achieve our full potential, but all of this leads us back to our interaction with the world. We are who we are in relationship with others. The wider our circle, the greater is our opportunity for self-discovery.

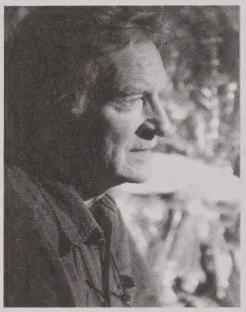
Martin Buber in *Heart-Searching and The Particular Way*, writes, "Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique." He quotes the Maggid of Zlotchov: "Every person's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities and not the repetition of something that another, be it even the greatest, has already achieved." Buber further illustrates his point: The wise Rabbi Bunan once said in old age, when he had already grown blind: "I should not like to trade places with our father Abraham! What good would it do God if Abraham became like a blind Bunam and blind Bunam became like Abraham? Rather than have this happen, I think I shall try to become a little more like myself." Rabbi Zusya, a short while before his death, expressed this same idea: "In the world to come I shall not be asked: 'Why were you not Moses? I shall be asked why were you not Zusya?'" Tenzen Robert Thurman in our featured interview reminds us, "Everyone has their own destinies to work out."

Each new day invites us to consider anew the questions, "Who am I?"—"Who are you?"—"Are we being who we want to be?" Answering is both a blessing and a burden, often part of a convoluted process, always in progress. Dag Hammarskjöld noted, "The longest journey is the journey inward." As you ponder this issue of *Sacred Journey*, may you find wisdom and encounter companions to guide you on your way!



Janet M. Haag is the Executive Director of Fellowship in Prayer.

An Interview with Tenzen Robert Thurman



Sergey Bermeniev

Robert A. F. "Tenzen" Thurman is the Jey Tsong Khapa professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, the President of Tibet House US, an educational non-profit dedicated to preserving and promoting the culture of Tibet, President of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies and Editor-in-Chief of the Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences, a long-term translation and publication project of the Tibetan Tengyur canon. The New York Times hailed Thurman as "the leading American expert on Tibetan Buddhism" and Time magazine named him one of the "25 Most Influential Americans." A close personal friend of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama for more than forty-five years, he is a former Tibetan Buddhist monk, co-founder with Richard Gere of Tibet House in New York, and the father of five children, including actress, Uma Thurman.

Professor Thurman is a charismatic speaker who lectures to packed audiences all over the world. His academic and popular writing explores the relevance and application of Tibetan Buddhism to contemporary thought and science, world cultures and politics. Thurman is a passionate advocate for justice and freedom for the Tibetan nation, within or without China, inspiring him to write Why the Dalai Lama Matters: His Act of Truth as the Solution for China, Tibet and the World (2008).

Thurman's work and insights are grounded in more than thirty-five years of serious academic scholarship. His B.A., A.M. and Ph.D. degrees are from Harvard and he has studied in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India and the United States. Fellowship in Prayer met with Professor Thurman in New York City and talked with him about his own spiritual journey and the profound wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism.

www.bobthurman.com, www.tibethouse.org, www.bobthurmanpodcast.com

Fellowship in Prayer: You are a Tibetan Buddhist Monk, a respected scholar and an activist. How do you integrate these different aspects of who you are?

Thurman: Right! I don't do that great a job! The first thing I must share is that I **was** a Tibetan Buddhist monk. I am still an ordained lay person but I'm not a monk because I have a family. I resigned when I came back to America in1965 because I felt there was no support for a Buddhist monk. There was no interest in anybody being a Buddhist monk and I had no leverage to talk to anybody as a monk. We didn't have Hare Krishnas on the street then, much less Tibetan Buddhist monks. People thought I was some kind of lunatic. My old Mongolian teacher had originally counseled me against becoming a monk. He said, "Don't be a formal monk, be an informal one," but I kept bugging him because I was an omniscient twenty year-old. He finally took me to see the Dalai Lama and said, "Maybe he will make you a monk." He did; and it was easy for me to be a monk in the Tibetan community. There it is normal and I was totally supported.

Why do you think you experienced such a lack of support in American culture?

After studying this for a few years, I discovered that in our predominantly Protestant culture, there is little tolerance for monks, period. There are some Catholic monks in monasteries, like Gethsemane, where there are four thousand acres of land and about forty monks living in mostly abandoned buildings, however in a culture dominated by a Protestant work ethic, there is no free lunch; therefore, no monasticism. You know in northern Europe when the kings and princes took back the land, took the wealth out of the monasteries, they put all the manpower into conquering everybody else and created a secular power system. When you don't have monasticism in a culture, you have militarism. When I studied history, I looked carefully at the relationship between mili-

tarism and monasticism in Asian societies. Challenged by a sociologist from Columbia—Seymour Melman—I came to realize the institutional antidote to militarism in any human society is monasticism. The two largest monastic communities in the world, Christian and Buddhist, are committed to nonviolence. Furthermore, monastics don't have children to be drafted and dragged off to war, meaning the state has a diminished power to leverage manpower. Tibet is an extreme example of this. In Tibet and Mongolia, the population became twenty percent monasticized and therefore, they have no military. I'm sorry I've digressed, so to go back to your original question, most American Buddhists (many who are former monks), myself included, will tell you the modern way to integrate Buddhism into your life is to do your *dharma* practice in your family, at home and at work and in society. Being a Buddhist and a scholar is not too difficult. There are many Christians who are scholars. We human beings are capable of compartmentalizing. I teach in a different way at the Buddhist center, where my students are Buddhist and meditating as such, than the way I teach about Buddhism, its history and philosophy, when I am in academia. For me, there is no problem integrating being Buddhist with being a scholar. In terms of being an activist…that's the good thing about being at Columbia where I am on the faculty. I had better write one or two academic books now and then, but I can also write books on polemics and advocacy.

Why did you initially embrace Buddhism?

I embraced Buddhism coming out of Christianity because I was a philosophy and psychology aficionado while an undergraduate at Harvard. Even before that when I was in high school at Exeter, I was always reading Hermann Hesse and Nietzsche, and later, Ludwig Wittgenstein. I kept searching for a better philosophy. I felt psychology went a little bit backwards and stalled with Freud and that Western psychology was reductionist, materializing the mind and psyche and going 100% with mood altering drugs to

change physical states. I thought this was a mistake, so at a certain point I had the sense that India held the best teaching. I wasn't sure it was Buddhism. I thought it had something to do with yoga. I wasn't like some people who are into the whole Dalai Lama thing—like from the time they are three years old and someone says, "Dalai Lama" and they levitate three feet in the air and later travel to Tibet just to meet him. I didn't have that kind of experience. I was simply looking for a rational, critical understanding. I wasn't being religious. In fact, I had a kind of prejudice against religion in my mind because religion asked me to believe non-rational things.

In what religion were you raised?

I was raised Presbyterian, loosely. I always debated with the pastor. I was his most frustrating customer, because . . . I liked Jesus, but I thought God was really cranky and needed something like psychotherapy. My parents were pretty secular. My father had a secret mystical leaning, well, not too secret. He didn't really go to church, but he loved Francois Mauriac. He admired the Catholic mystics. He was a translator who translated Mauriac's book on St. Francis from the French. My mother, an off-Broadway actress, thought Shakespeare was god, and her religion was with the theatre. Neither of my brothers was particularly religious either. So, as a family we weren't very religious. I never could deal with the theodicy question. I thought it made no sense that someone who had omnipotent power would create such a messed up world. Most Buddhists in India don't think you should blame evil in the world on an omnipotent being, nor should you go into a Zoroastrian type of dualism. As humans we are participants both in evil and in good. Buddhists are not atheists. This is a big misunderstanding. In India, Brahma, who is the creator, is a player in Buddhist literature. He talks to Buddha and Buddha talks to him. Brahma owns up to the fact that he is actually not omnipotent and doesn't control things 100%. He is very powerful. He can do a lot

of damage or provide a lot of benefit, but he is not omnipotent and this is a very, very important point. This is why in India they believe in the existence of the gods, various ones. Hindus just relativize them or rather the gods relativize themselves because in the sacred literature, they proclaim themselves to be non-omnipotent. They say they don't want people to be mad at them when things go terribly wrong. In Buddhist literature Brahma tells Buddha that people have to take responsibility. This is karma. Max Weber says that karma theory is the neatest theory of moral accounting in the world of religious history, because there is always an infinite past and anything that happens to you somehow comes from what you did in the past. So everything always balances. It is not fatalism because what you do now will influence what happens to you in the future but you always have choices. You see Buddhists have all kinds of ways of getting out of illogical difficulty, which I find very wonderful. In my travels I've met Sufis and went to Mt. Athos in Greece; I spent time with the Swamis in India; but the minute I met the Tibetans, I was home. At the time I didn't think about my having had a former life but eventually my experience totally confirmed this. I learned to speak the Tibetan language fluently in ten weeks. I started studying Buddhism and found satisfaction.

So, you embraced Buddhism?

Right, but I don't know if I still embrace Buddhism in the same way. The whole Tibetan thing was a homecoming for me, but at that time, I wanted to become a monk and a monk is professionally homeless. In Buddhism, the devout go from home to homelessness. They make a home of homelessness. A monk is someone who goes on a journey during which he is aware of death at all times. The Dalai Lama is a simple Buddhist monk. This means he knows that he is entitled to his house but it is not relevant for his soul. With this understanding as a Buddhist monk, you leave your house behind, the same way you leave your body behind in death. You choose to live in a state of onto-

logical or cosmic homelessness. Similarly, you are family-less so you can have the same devotion to all beings that people would normally have only to their kids. You seek to diffuse affection and compassion to all beings. This is the job of a Buddhist monk anyway, and I think it is similar for Christian monks. In Christianity everyone is a child of God, so Christians are part of a much larger family through their brothers and sisters. This diffusion of kinship is a way to create larger fellowships, and more humane interactions. Christianity and Buddhism both depend on monasticism and the values it protects. This shared reliance can create a huge bond between them. Buddhism is basically realism. You have to remember that Buddhism is not based on a revelation from a god, although there were gods present in Buddhism. These gods told Buddha, "You have to figure it out yourself." In other words they didn't say to go and tell people to believe and they would be saved. The Buddha gained an understanding of the way the world is and by understanding reality, he accepted that reality is all right. It is nurturing to life. It is positive. The reason we see life as difficult and impossible at times is because of ignorance—fundamentally, this is the mistaken idea that the universe and I are separate and that I have to struggle against the universe—a losing struggle, of course. This is the first noble truth in Buddhism. It is a losing struggle for egotistical beings to think they are absolute, that their egos are absolute and more important than everything else when everything else disagrees vigorously with this notion. That's all it is. The Buddha looked at the reality and discovered the self is empty of that absolute quality. The self is, in fact, interconnected with everything and therefore, no struggle is necessary. The self can be in harmony with everything. The Buddha found the universe to be buoyant and sustaining, with sufficiency and abundance and energy. He realized the core of the universe is not a dark nothingness, and not a concretized self /other conflate. Underneath everything is what Buddhists call the clear light of the void, which is like infinite compassion, love, energy—a type of mystical theism--although Buddha didn't say it was owned

by any particular deity. As far as he is concerned, it is not owned by anybody. It is available to all beings. Knowing that the very fabric of the body, every cell and every sub-atomic particle is this light, the clear light of the void, is to be infinite and empty of the vacuum. This is the discovery of reality. Buddhism seeks to enable beings to discover their own reality and realize their all-rightness, their oneness with the plenitude of energy, based on the void-ness or emptiness of the egotistical separate self. You see, people often think void-ness or emptiness means nothingness, which is quite wrong. Emptiness means plenitude that is devoid of any absolute separated thing. Absolute means nonrelated and something nonrelated can't be part of the world. It can't relate to the world or it would lose its absoluteness. This is simple logic. Do you follow me?

What would you say to me if I told you that I don't follow you?

I would try to explain it again. I often tell the Dalai Lama he shouldn't say we are a non-theistic tradition, although he says it out of a sense of scrupulosity about the nature of Buddhism. He looks very serious and says we are non-theistic like "come here and execute me" for saying such a thing. The point is Buddhists don't accept any absolute ties. The story about so and so creating the world, Brahma or **YHWH** or Vishnu or whomever, Buddhists don't accept this as an absolute. In that sense, we are non-theistic, according to anybody else's absolutist story. But when it comes to the mystical vision that God is in everything and everything is God, such as the theistic vision Meister Eckhart had in the desert that everything is love—all Buddhists, more explicitly Mahayana Buddhists, are theistic. The Buddha's transformative power over reality is huge. In a pedagogical way, the world is shaped by enlightened beings who mature and evolve rather than by deluded beings who suffer. In Mahayana Buddhism, there are miraculous visionary elements but to say that the Buddha totally controls the destiny of beings or created it to start with is a no. Never is it said that Buddhas create the world, they are not divine

in that sense. There is no claim of creator responsibility or total control over others. They are divine in their power to shape a world for the benefit of the disciples. Everyone has their own destinies to work out.

How does "prayer" or "spiritual practice" as a Buddhist make a difference in your everyday life?

Oh, it makes every difference. There are five fundamental addictions in Buddhism, you could call them emotional or mental addictions. If I don't try to restrain them, my anger, hatred, delusion, pride and envy, then I get really awful, even more awful than I already am. Each addiction has an antidote, you know. Anger's antidote is patience. Greed's antidote is contentment. Delusion's antidote is wisdom. Envy's antidote is rejoicing in the good fortune of others. Pride's antidote is realism about yourself. These are the reasons we need to practice meditation, to constantly renew ourselves, even the Dalai Lama. Once while he was meditating at 4 a.m., a CNN reporter asked what he was doing. The Dalai Lama looked at him and said jokingly, "I am looking at you because you are interrupting me." The reporter got all flustered, and said, "Well, no. I mean what are you doing for your meditation?" The Dali Lama then gave an answer I think is quite brilliant. He said, "I am shaping my motivation for the day." I think this is a good description of what he was actually doing in his morning meditation. He was asking himself, "What am I doing by way of compassionate activity? Am I thinking about some way of aggrandizing myself or am I thinking of what I have to do to help this or that person?" Buddhists have a practice they call the exchange of self and other, which means exchanging self-preoccupation for altruism, or other-preoccupation. We have to constantly keep reshaping this intention. If you are a Buddha and enlightened, this intention is spontaneous but achieving that state takes a long time and is far off for most of us.

Do you try to shape your motivation for the day in your meditation?

I do try to do this. I get too busy sometimes. I don't pretend to pray or meditate that much, but I do try to get in a few minutes every day, at least twenty minutes at some point. The best time for me is before falling sleeping or fully waking. If I don't meditate before jumping into the day, I have a different kind of day. If I don't meditate for two or three days, then I get really frazzled and I need to "drop out."

How would you articulate the similarities and differences between prayer as we ordinarily conceive of it in the West and Buddhist meditation?

It's good you say "ordinarily" when you reference prayer in the West as being distinct from meditation, because the great mystics of the West certainly had intense meditation practice. Pseudo Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, St. Francis, St. Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross are all great Western mystics. Even Luther was a kind of mystic and I think Merton is a great mystic for modern times. I don't think it is wise or fair to draw a big East-West division. There are meditation traditions in the West, and Buddhists pray, even though they don't pray to an omnipotent deity. It's true that prayer is ordinarily understood as asking for grace or favors from an omnipotent being whom it is believed will grant requests if you are pure enough and your prayers are strong enough, whereas Buddhist meditation is intended to lead you to developing your own understanding and your own mind. This is where the courses are different. However, there are Buddhists who ask for grace from different savior type figures and there are Christians who try to realize *imitatio Christi* or oneness with God. You can't draw an absolute difference, East and West. There are different types of Christianity and different types of Buddhism. What I am saying is that between a few snake-charming Baptists in Arkansas and Pope

Benedict with the College of Cardinals, there is as much difference in the understanding and practice of Christianity, as there is between those who practice different forms of Buddhism.

From what you said earlier, it seems your relationship with the Dali Lama is significant to you and your Buddhist practice. Would you share a treasured experience or some general wisdom you have gleaned from this relationship?

I have had many treasured experiences with the Dali Lama. When I was teaching at Amherst I went through a certain phase when I was very anti-communist. I was really mad and was being very critical of communists and the Dali Lama said, "No, no, no—don't do that—if you met someone with one leg, would you spend time scolding them that they didn't have the other or would you praise them for what they are doing with the one that they have?" Of course, he was talking to a man with only one eye, (Thurman lost his eye in an accident while he was a young man) so I said, "Well, of course, of course." He pointed out, "Communists have made mistakes and been violent but their fundamental idea that life is not just for accumulating wealth and the notion that wealth should be shared is good. If you can praise someone for whatever good they are doing then you can work with them and try to get beyond whatever is bad, rather than just getting mad about what's bad." This is an example of a gem of wisdom I learned from him. Another gem that might be in an area of interest to you is that he once said to the people gathered at a reception for the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard that we really have to get over this idea that one another's religion is inferior. He confessed that when he was younger, he used to think that people who believed in a creator were childish, foolish, immature and irrational and therefore, couldn't possibly tread a useful path. He said he thought this way because he had no exposure to Christians, or any theists really, and that his own Buddhist thought was based on philosophies from ancient India. He said that when he

met Thomas Merton, he realized a person can become enlightened through belief in God, even though it may not fit certain kinds of rationality. It is powerful—this feeling of intimacy with ultimate reality; being children of God is a loving and compassionate concept. He described all the good ways belief in God can be interpreted and fit into how he thinks we develop spiritually. He said he had to work to cure himself of a chauvinist view. He then went on to say to everyone assembled there, "I don't believe in your God, but you know, it is now your job, since you sort of like me and think we share something spiritually, to forgive me and realize that maybe through my way I can get somewhere considered desirable from your way." The Dali Lama humorously noted, "I wanted to tell you this right away because I don't want you to get to know me for too long and get to like me too much only to discover I don't believe in God because you might faint!" Bit by bit through experiences I had with him, the Dali Lama got me to change the negative view I had developed toward Christianity, even to the point where I could appreciate and like it. I came to realize that Catholics and Buddhists really share something when it comes to monasticism. I even wrote a book on it. We really should work together and let go of trying to convert each other to our ideology, or the notion that we alone know what God really wants, or what or who God really is, for that matter.

What do you understand to be the source of the Dali Lama's courage and commitment, given all the suffering over Tibet?

There are two sources. I think the first source of his courage and commitment is rooted in what Buddhists perceive to be the nature of reality. In other words, no matter what happens to him the Dali Lama feels connected to a source of infinite energy, inside his cells, underneath subatomic particles, contacted by the spirit, the mind, the soul. He feels that even if someone is beating his body, underneath the cells of his body is the realm of pure light that is blissful. This is mystical, you could say. There is a

sense of a welling up from the core of the reality of life, an infinite sustaining energy, which is what I think all highly spiritually developed people tap into, whatever they call it, and however fully they tap into it. I think this is the main source of the Dali Lama's courage and commitment. A secondary source, I would say, on a worldly level, is that as a Buddhist realist—and I mean coming out of the deep realism that defines Buddhism— the mindset that you achieve liberation from suffering when you fully understand reality. The Dali Lama sees the unreality in this point in history of a continuing pattern of military domination. He bases his thinking about this on the ideas of intellectuals like Jonathan Schell who point out that due to technology, advanced communication and methods of warfare, winning a war is not possible. In the past we stepped out of diplomacy and into warfare to defeat the enemy's army and make the enemy's population do what we wanted them to do because we couldn't negotiate with them to do it beforehand. The problem is we aren't winning wars because it is actually not possible. Our weapons are too powerful. We can destroy a country or exterminate a population, but we can't win. We can look at any war anywhere in the world right now and no one is winning. The Dalai Lama knows intuitively that war is self-destructive and we can't accomplish anything meaningful through warfare. He goes back to Buddhist principles and the Gandhian idea that non-violence is the only viable method for resolving conflict. We need to wake up to the fact that war is obsolete; that violence is obsolete on this planet. The Dali Lama has been saying this for 50 years.

Thank you for sharing these insights and experiences with us.

The Door of Divinity

JOYCE RUPP

So, again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate . . . ." JOHN 10:7

In some religious traditions, "gate" and "door" are used interchangeably to speak about a divine being. The Hebrew scriptures picture Holy Wisdom sitting by the gates of the city ready to welcome those who approach. "Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors." (Proverbs 8:34). Buddha's disciples quote their enlightened teacher as saying, "I am the Door. "The Sufis of Islam refer to Allah as "The Opener and the Closer" of doors. In John's gospel, Jesus announces that he is the "gate" or "door" to fullness of life (John 10:9-10).

If we look at what a physical door does, use of this image to connect with the sacred becomes apparent. A physical door is a means of access to another space. The divine door is also an accessible passage, opening the way for us to explore the mysterious regions of our true self. The Holy One offers safe, protective passage, whether we roam in the hitherto unknown regions of our soul or move about in the external world exploring life from its diverse angles. Day by Day, we continually pass through the Door of Love.

The story of the Exodus journey exemplifies the door of divinity as a conduit for spiritual growth. When the Israelites hurried away from enslavement in Egypt, they brought with them an unquenchable thirst for a homeland of their own. The Door of Love provided access for them to move toward this goal. The Exodus people experienced this door each day of their long, tedious journey to the promised land. The Great Door never closed to this people bound together by a desire for liberation. God's heart remained ajar in spite of their doubts, grumblings, hesitations, and rebellions. As

they passed through the wilderness, these wanderers were nourished, forgiven, challenged, taught, guided and transformed by this faithful Presence.

Each encounter moved the wandering people farther along toward the promised land, even though they were never sure if they would arrive there. The Exodus community kept entering the passageway of growth, learning from their failures and their increasingly purified faith. Always, the divine door provided both protection and clearance for what lay ahead in their search for a home.

This group of people wandering through their unfolding life represents the soul of each person searching for the promised land of personal authenticity and a vibrant life with God. Here, too, the Holy One becomes the door, providing safe passage and clearance to what lies ahead in the journey to wholeness. The Door of Divinity is a channel of love, constantly available for us to pass through as we enter our chamber of transformation. As we continue this journey throughout our lifetime, the Door of Divinity always stands open as a grace-filled passageway.

A long time ago I heard a professor in a spirituality class warn, "Be sure to take God with you when you go within." In other words, "Be sure you pass through the Great Door of Love as you enter the realm of your deeper self" so you do not dismiss, deny or dodge anything that seeks your attention when you enter the depths of your being. Like the Israelites, if we forget or ignore the Door of Love, doubts and discouragement easily overpower us.

As with the Exodus people traveling through unfamiliar and sometimes treacherous territory, when we enter unknown terrain, some encounters will threaten to detour us from our path of spiritual growth. We can find ourselves grumbling when life does not give us all we want or when the price of transformation costs us dearly. Failures, defeats and disillusionments temporarily wipe out our hope of reaching the promised land of our true self until we realize these very experiences are stepping-stones to the wisdom we need. Just about the time we get fed up with our wandering and seeming lack of direction, we remember we have safe passage in

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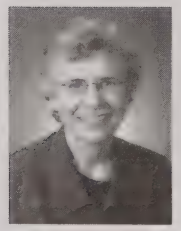
the One who is our constant guide. All we need do is turn ourselves toward the Great Door, move through this conduit of love and travel peacefully again.

Now is the time to remember the Exodus journeys of your life and revisit what you learned from them. Look back and see how the Great Door provided a passageway for you to further freedom.



Joyce Rupp is a member of the Servite (Servants of Mary) community. She is well known for her work as a writer, spiritual "midwife," and retreat and conference speaker. Excerpted from *Open the Door: A Journey to the True Self* and used with permission © Sorin Books, an imprint of Ave Maria Press www.avemariapress.com

SAVE THE DATE

Fellowship in Prayer

60th Anniversary Conference

June 24–27, 2010

to be held on the Princeton University Campus

Featuring:

R. Gustav Niebuhr, associate professor in Religion & the Media, Syracuse University; author of *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America*; former New York Times National Correspondent and Washington Post National Staff Writer

Joan Chittister, OSB, founder/executive director of Benetvision; author and international lecturer; columnist for the National Catholic Reporter and a prophetic voice for renewal in America's

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; writer, editor, syndicated columnist, and international lecturer

Roshi Bernie Glassman, Zen master and leader for socially engaged Buddhism; founder and spiritual director of Zen Peacemakers; teacher, writer, retreat leader and international lecturer

Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement; international lecturer; creator of ground breaking interfaith and interfaith programs

Workshop Leaders:
Rabia Terri Harris, The Muslim Peace Fellowship; **Rabbi Justus Baird**, Center for Multifaith Education at Auburn Theological Seminary; **Rev. Paul B. Raushenbush**, Princeton University; **Amy Rakusin & Phil Fratesi**, The Compassionate Listening Project; **Lhaklong Sönam**, A teacher ordained in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition by Nyingma Master, Anam Thubten Rinpoche; **Sohaib Sultan**, Princeton University ... more exciting information to follow!

Though the Well Runs Deep

JENNA PEELER

Though the well runs deep, deeper than I will ever know in this lifetime,
    I constantly lose sight of the eternal flow of healing water.
Father, forgive me for my lack of trust, my constant insistence that
    I can provide water on my own
Only to find that my well runs dry.

You created me with this unquenchable thirst
    and provided an endless source of living water.
You are the Source,
You are the gracious giver of life,
Life eternal, life abundant, life without end.

Raised in North Carolina, residing in Pennsylvania, Jenna Peeler is happily married and the mother of two. She is a CPA who encourages her clients to grow closer to God through their personal finances.

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Protect Your Children

RON ATCHISON

Dear God of many Names,
Protect your children tonight wherever they are
sleeping
And let them know the world does not have to be like
this
Place a kiss upon each of their foreheads
And remind them oh so gently
That there are reasons to be hopeful
And reasons for them to dream beautiful dreams.

Amen

Ron Atchison is creator and developer of the website *Inspiration Peak*, home to some of the world's most beautiful quotes, poems and short stories. www.inspirationpeak.com

A Child's Prayer

DEBORAH MAXEY

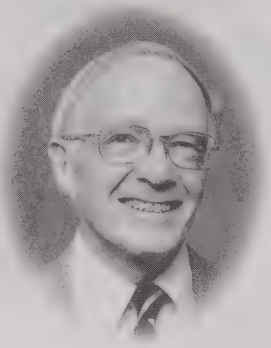
When just a child I prayed
That God might make things talk to me,
Like deer and flowers,
Birds, and plants,
Rocks, and waterfalls.
(Somehow I knew they could.)
And through the years He's granted me
That request from time to time.
If I listen quietly enough
I can hear a song deep down inside me.
And the wind softly whispers the lyrics.
We are friends, this earth and I.

Since childhood Deborah Maxey has been writing poetry and meditations on her faith that reflect her feelings and experiences. She has been published in *The Advocate, The Mid-America Poetry Review* and *The Lutheran Digest.*

In Rememberance

"Some people come into our lives and quickly go.
Some people move our souls to dance.
They awaken us to new understanding
with the passing whisper of their wisdom.
Some people make the sky more
beautiful to gaze upon.
They stay in our lives for awhile,
leave footprints on our hearts
and we are never, ever the same."

PAUL WALSH



NOVEMBER 27, 1920–APRIL 17, 2009

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
TRUSTEE
AND FRIEND OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS

Paul's complete obituary is available online at
www.fellowshipinprayer.org

In Paul's Own Words

The divine mystery that we try to grasp through the name God, or Buddha nature, or Brahman, or the Cosmic Christ, or the Inner Light, dwells in the heart of each of us. At heart we are all one in our desire for loving unity with the ultimate reality, with each other, with all of creation ~

I try not to let the turbulence of "thoughts" and emotions, fears and fantasies carry me away from my True Self and from the wonderful reality of here-and-now. And as I walk smiling joyfully and indiscriminately on all who pass by, a miracle happens! They smile back! Hurrying along, tense and preoccupied, hardly aware of their surroundings, my smile penetrates the armor of their self-concern. They look startled. Confused. Then their faces relax. Their eyes light up. They smile. For a moment at least my smile has transformed them into the happy, peaceful people they really are. Try it yourself. At home. At your place of work. In the streets. Like a pebble dropped in a pool of water, your smile will radiate out to eternity.

Mystics have gone to mountains and deserts to find the sacred space best suited to communion with God. Pilgrims have gone to cathedrals, shrines and temples. Most of us, however, talk to—or listen for—the voice of God in the kitchen, on the subway, by the bank of a stream. All ways are perfect—for in truth, God is everywhere and in everything, and the intention and intensity of the one who prays is of far greater importance than his or her physical surroundings or form of prayer…in the stillness, we come into communion with our God—however we name or perceive the ultimate source and creative energy of the universe… we become more loving, more hopeful, more compassionate—we become channels through which those divine qualities become manifest in the world. When we pray we set into motion vast, invisible energies from which visible effects inevitably follow.

A Journey from There to Here

PATRICIA MATHEWS

I needed motivation to write about my faith journey and asked my rabbi for a writing assignment. He's not really my rabbi; he's my friend who happens to be a rabbi and a writer. His reply felt like a big vague topic and the all-caps sounded Rabbinical and so I had my motivation: "I invite you to write on 'THE JOURNEY FROM THERE TO HERE,' I am hopeful it will take you inward along many paths; some old and some rather new."

One path is linguistics. I love linguistics. Linguistic analysis gives language and meaning a sense of security of structure. So, at the orthographic surface, there and here are separated by one letter [t]. That's a short journey. Phonemically, the words share one sound, /r/—a liquid consonant known for pulling vowel sounds toward it; this makes the vowel hard to distinguish. So, the journey from there to here is going to be somewhat fluid.

There were additional instructions: Take the time to hear God in the pauses between the lines and before the words. That's additional baggage—morphology, semantics and pragmatics—lines, words and pauses. Pauses are particularly fluid, always running away from structural analysis. Pauses are an abyss of wonder and here to be constrained by the sound of God. This is a longer journey.

To me, the most perfect sentence is "I am." A simple noun and verb holds infinite meanings. All the structure that linguistics offers this sentence is counterbalanced with the fact that the structure cannot possibly contain all its meaning. It's like life and religion and God.

I began the first task of this reflection by looking at the linguistic structure of the topic with a focus on the journey. **The** is a definite article, a determiner, so this was a defi-

nite journey—a determinate journey. **Journey**, as a noun or a verb, implies travel and a passage. The function of the preposition **from** can be temporal or spatial; from a time or from a place. Pragmatics tells us that the meanings of **there** and **here**, as deictic expressions, are understood from the vantage point of the speaker. The speaker is the default center of **there** and **here** so the meaning is spatially fixed. Therefore, the structure of my primary task is to reflect on a determinate journey that covers space or time and is fixed in my center.

The second task is like that liquid consonant, washing away the structure; take time in the pauses to hear God. Pauses may exist in short units of time but, what occurs within a pause is neither temporal nor spatial. God also occurs without constraints of time and space. So, my second task is to listen for and to God in silence while reflecting on the journey.

I know journeys to places. I have been to the Taj Mahal and spent Christmas in Timbuktu. I've been snorkeling in Sri Lanka and was married in a chapel covered in snow, deep in the English countryside. I was smiled down upon by a monk in a tiny temple on a mountainside in China. The vastness of the world that I've seen, the numbers of people, and our interdependence has always given me stunning pauses to wonder that God is all that and more that my wonder cannot name. And, I pause in the realization that I am a piece of God in that. That is my determinate journey from there to here.

I know spiritual journeys, too. Spiritual journeys happen in real time and encom-

To me, the most perfect sentence is

I am.

A simple noun and verb hold infinite meanings.

pass large emotional spaces. I've traveled alone and with others into deep, dark emotions of loss and fear. In the centers of those emotions, in the variations of heartlessness I've touched and felt, there is a vast need for connection. This has given me pause to wonder at the unfathomable depths of evil and wonder at the gift of my belief that creation trumps that darkness. I pause, knowing that as I am a piece of God, my actions are called to foster connection and creation. In that pause is my determinate journey from there to here.

Last year I was meditating and God said to me, "Go to where you are." I was confused because direct messages are rare and God's grammar was awkward. In the surface structure I thought the message could connect to a job search and possible new travels. I asked friends to interpret it for me. Nothing they offered gave a meaning to the message that touched my heart. It sat with me like a really long pause.

Finally, I got it. God's meaning did not connect to a here or there. But it does connect to this reflection on my journeys, and God's presence in the pauses. God was telling me to go where I find perfect meaning, in the pauses of wonder, the connecting spaces and times and the perfect meaning of *I am*. God was telling me to be where I foster connection and creation. Now, what is the structure I can give to that? Or this? What journey is next?

Patricia Mathews teaches academic writing and English to speakers of other languages. She is a native of West Michigan, a mother of three sons and a master gardener. She received her B.A. from the University of Michigan and Master's in Education and International Teachers Training (TESOL) from Grand Valley State University. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Composition and TESOL program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Fellowship In Prayer Welcomes New Trustees

Sohaib Nazeer Sultan is serving as the first full-time Muslim Life Coordinator at Princeton University. He is also a public lecturer on Islam, Muslim Culture and Muslim-Western relations in the US and abroad. Sohaib completed his B.A. in Journalism and Political Science at Indiana University and is currently enrolled at Hartford Theological Seminary where he is pursuing a Master's in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations and Islamic Chaplaincy. He has authored two books, *The Koran for Dummies* as part of the famous "For Dummies" series by Wiley Publishing Company and *The Qu'ran and Sayings of the Prophet Mohammad* with Skylight Paths Publishing.

David Newton has managed Palmer Square in downtown Princeton since 1995. He moved to Princeton in 1983 and owns, leases and manages real estate in the Princeton area and beyond. David hails from London, England where he attended Stowe School, received his undergraduate degree from Manchester University and obtained his MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. He is a member of the Princeton Jewish Center and regularly attends services at Chabad of Mercer County, the Center for Jewish Life at Princeton University, and the Carlebach Shul in New York. He is active in religious and secular organizations and regularly attends study sessions to learn Mishnah, Chassidus and Kabbalah.

Both men bring to the Board deep religious commitment, openness to diversity and a wealth of human experience.

Vale of Uncertainty

SUE COPPERNOLL

When on a journey of the soul, though informed by faith and surrounded by awareness of loving divine presence, we may find on the path strange, unexpected dry spells—those times in which nothing is sure, nothing is clear and all is confusion. No turn in the road brings renewed vision or direction. Our prayers seem to reach ourselves alone, resounding with a dull thud.

No dark night of the soul, the vale of uncertainty is an arid desert place. It is a detour on the road home, it is a time in which questions go unanswered and every certainty is shattered. There may be no demons to wrestle, no battles to be fought, no looming disasters. There is only a drought of the spirit, an aching absence of joy and hope, a loss of spiritual balance. Without sustenance, we are left weary and numb. Words of assurance sound upon our ears, appear as interesting ideas, but ring no chimes in the chambers of our souls.

"Wait on the Lord" remains our command, our responsibility, our only alternative. Limping through the vale of uncertainty, we remember ruefully the days of our first faltering steps toward faith. We recall resting in comfort and trust in God's presence, yet we now wonder if Vale of Uncertainty—the path shall ever again rise before us in joy, in clarity and in hope.

We are prone to entering the vale of uncertainty in times of transition, times when movement toward what comes next is made in haste, with perhaps too great a dollop of certainty. Times when we've gone with a headlong rush into our own wishes for ourselves. Times when we've foregone a requisite deep listening for guidance and direction from the Holy. When we know for certain-sure, may we not come to know delusion and error?

To live in the vale of uncertainty is an arduous task. To hold on to that which has sustained us in the past—confidence that a sacred path will again emerge—is a daunting challenge. To know again that which is unknown and undreamed becomes but another Mirage in

the desert of our wandering. To find courage while confronting the deadening apathy of non-connection to our sacred center seems beyond our capability.

"I just don't know" is our truth while in the vale of uncertainty. This assertion is an acknowledgement that rigors of faith teachings too often have made abhorrent. We are told to cling with all our might to a Vale of Uncertainty—absolute, unwavering adherence to orthodoxy as presented line for line, word for word. For each of us, accepting dilemma is both the beginning and the end of the journey through the vale of uncertainty. Admitting that we are stuck. Placing ourselves where we are, on a spiral, the winding, circuitous path of the soul.

The path of not knowing carries the frightening circumstance of loss of strength to find our way. It is a place of not knowing so much it hurts. We begin, then, to pray the prayer of willingness: "Mother, Father, God, Source: Here I will stay, waiting, until my path again comes plain."

Hesitantly, we take cautious steps into awareness of and renewed trust in the divine presence. Our hearts begin to open to God's loving care. We are provided renewed strength for the journey, new light on our path. Songs of praise to our creator and source arise again from our hearts and soar to the heavens from our lips. We are home. Praise be to God

Sue Coppernoll, a retired pastoral counselor, is a woman of words, both written and spoken. A poet and lifelong journal keeper, Sue leads workshops in the art of journal writing as a source of wisdom, solace, self-expression and spiritual healing.

Just as in earthly life lovers long for the moment when they are able to breathe forth their love for each other, to let their souls blend in a soft whisper, so the mystic longs for the moment when in prayer he can, as it were, creep into God.

SÖREN KIERKEGAARD

Our body is a container of wisdom and a tool of our wakening.

MEGAN DON

IF YOU WANT TO RECEIVE THE DIVINE LIGHT, PRAY. IF YOU HAVE BEGUN TO MAKE PROGRESS AND WANT THIS LIGHT TO BE INTENSIFIED WITHIN YOU, PRAY. AND IF YOU HAVE REACHED THE SUMMIT OF PERFECTION AND WANT TO BE SUPER-ILLUMINATED SO AS TO REMAIN IN THAT STATE, PRAY.

ANGELA FOLIGNO

True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.

WILLIAM PENN

The heart is an image for the self
at a deeper level,
deeper than our perception,
intellect, emotion, and volition.
As the spiritual center of the total self,
it affects all of these:
our sight, thoughts, feelings and will.

MARCUS J. BORG

In the attitudes of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after truth.

Gandhi

In a narrow circle the mind contracts.
Man grows with his expanded needs.

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.

RUMI

The real seeker of truth never seeks truth.
On the contrary, he tries to clean himself of all that is
untrue, inauthentic, insincere—
and when his heart is ready, purified,
the guest comes.
You cannot find the guest,
you cannot go after him.
You have to be in a right attitude.

OSHO

If you see good in people, you radiate a harmonious loving energy which uplifts those who are around you.
If you can maintain this habit, this energy will turn into a steady flow of love.

ANNAMALAI SWAMI

Prayer Shapes and Visions of God: Moving from Need to Trust

ANDREW MOORE

Several years ago, as a young high school teacher, I awoke to a disturbing realization. My daily prayers weren't bringing me closer to God. Somehow, they were propelling me further distant. My prayers were somehow draining my faith.

I would wake in the mornings before heading to school, drop to my knees, and ask God for help with my day. I prayed asking that He would walk with me as I taught. I chose one student to pray for each morning–most often I asked God to watch over a fourteen year old girl whose family life was in shambles, whose head drooped to her desk for most of the day, hidden underneath the hood of a black sweatshirt. I also asked that I would become more like what God wanted of me: more giving, understanding and caring; less concerned with whether or not students liked me. At the time, I felt like I was practicing faithfully, but eventually I realized that there was something about my conversation with God which was anything but faithful. It took months and months of meditation for me to understand the problem.

The words I spoke to God came from my religious tradition, but the way I said them–the messages my mind lifted as I spoke the words–somehow expressed something deeply unhealthy. I would pray in the mornings and throughout the day, but much of the time, I felt distant from God. I felt an increasingly insecure urge to constantly ask for help. Towards God, I felt need first, and then love.

I began to notice several prayer shapes that were pulling me down. The first pattern of prayer went something like this: "God, please watch over Jeff. He is suffering and needs your healing presence. Please

be with him. Please heal him." Several times a day, I lifted prayers of this type for different neighbors.

It took me months to realize it, but there were a few underlying assumptions that I rehearsed every time I asked God to watch over a neighbor. Beneath the words, I practiced a belief that God was not already paying attention. God did not see my loved one's need as strongly as I did, and He did not care as much as I did. But because God loved the faithful and listened to them, He might intervene if I persistently raised my voice. Every time I lifted one of these prayers, I practiced these understandings, entrenching them deeply within the pathways of my brain. And so, each prayer made me smaller and closed my eyes to God a little more.

It's not that the words were bad in themselves; for some people, the same words of prayer invite healthy relationship. However, the words suggested certain dirty understandings within me. The meanings I rehearsed – those hidden melodies permeating the words – were locking God into a small trunk in my mind. The meanings I practiced day after day were limiting my vision of God.

In time, I found myself trying to revise the way I prayed. I asked myself, how can I better express the transcendent nature of God as I speak to Him?

What would happen, I asked, if I changed my words from, "God, please watch over Jeff," to "God, I trust that you are watching over Jeff"? What if I changed my words from "he is suffering and needs you" to "I know that you see his suffering more than I ever will and that you are always beside him. I know that you care more than I can ever comprehend or than I can ever care myself"?

I found that I could still express, "God, I am worried." "God I am afraid for him and wish that he wouldn't have to be in such pain.""God I can do so little and while I will do what I can, he rests in your hands."These outpourings of my soul could still be lifted to God, even when I changed

the words and the messages behind the words.

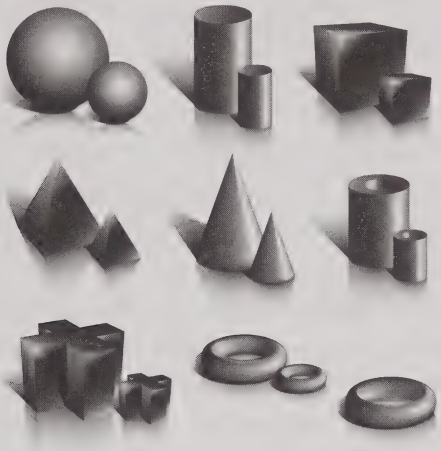
What I wanted to remind myself of each time I prayed was this: that God's love is greater than my own. That the person I care for most is a person God cares for even more. I wanted to remind myself in each prayer that God is always infinitely present, with me, with my loved ones, and even with those who seem most immoral in the world. God doesn't wait for human prayer to come close to us. She is already present.

A second prayer shape that I practiced seemed to also be molding my vision of God in a way that was very limiting. Regularly I would lift prayers of self-transformation, asking for God's intervention in my own life. I would pray for help with my own personal failings, asking God to make me more humble, or less self-centered, or more loving. The words typically went something like this: "Father, I am not serving you well. My pride blinds me to the needs of my neighbors. Please help me to follow you better." Again, the meanings I expressed beneath the words degraded my relationship with God.

I remember reading a poem during a college church service called "And God said No," by Claudia Minden Weisz, in which prayer after prayer was offered to God, asking God for self-transformation. Each time, God responded with a denial, explaining that the prayer itself was a misunderstanding. Freedom from pride is not a gift to be given, God said in the poem, but something we humans must do from within. Patience is not granted by God, but is earned through tribulation. Eventually Weisz offers this concluding stanza:

> I asked God to help me
> love others as much as
> He loves me, and God
> said, "Ah—finally you
> have the idea."

The poem made an impression on me, and since that time, most of my prayers asked for help from God instead of asking for God to transform me from without. It seemed a wiser, truer way to pray. I liked



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this approach better because it is less passive. It admits that I have to stand up and struggle alongside God. It expresses both reliance on God and a will to work for change. But in the end, even this revision of prayer didn't seem enough. Even as I prayed, "God, help me to become more humble," I constantly practiced a lack of trust in God.

I prayed as if God's helping presence depended on my prayer, and that if I didn't lift up my voice, God might be absent. This, to me, seems too small a vision of God. It seems that God never leaves my side, and he never forsakes me. Even when I feel like God is absent, He is not. This to me is a bigger vision of God. A truer vision.

And so, I have explored different words that have helped me to daily express this bigger faith. Now, if I seek to transform myself and practice humility, I might say something like this: "God, I love you. I wish that I was more humble. Today I forgot to see my neighbors because I was thinking so much about myself. Thank you for helping me to see a better way. It will be a struggle to change, but I trust, God, that you will not leave my side. I know that without you I can do nothing,

but with you here, by leaning on you and struggling against my old habits of mind, I trust that I can become a humbler person."These prayers are spontaneous rather than formulaic, and in each unique prayer I try to stay aware of what I express and of what beliefs I practice.

I try to express love and trust. In fact, I've found that the most powerful prayer I know is"God, I love you." And while I regularly share my struggles of self with God as I would with a parent or close friend, my prayer isn't laced with need anymore. I pray to share myself. While I understand that God already knows me deep inside, this act of self-expression seems important.

I try to express that I need God, but that I trust that She is constantly with me – that She will never fail to meet me halfway. And I remind myself that it is up to me to strive towards better living – that all deep transformation requires me to wrestle, to struggle, to diligently work to follow the path that God sets before me and helps me along. These are the understandings I rehearse now in my daily prayers.

The way I pray shapes my visions of God. The language I use sinks into my mind and sculpts my relationship with the divine, for better or worse. Falling to my knees and lifting words to God is no guarantee of spiritual growth. Yet if I can be aware of how I pray, I have found, every prayer can help bring me closer to God. SJ

Andrew Moore is a high school English teacher from Denver, CO. A graduate of St. Olaf College and Colorado College, he has written for the *Woodmen* and *Cheyenne Edition* newspapers in Colorado Springs. He can be reached at andrew.moore27@yahoo.com

Seeking the Essence

RUSSILL PAUL

All Religious and Spiritual Traditions have a mystical core. Although Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and the many other faiths of the world have accumulated formal structures, doctrines and the external trappings common to all institutions, each began as a way of connecting directly with the Divine presence and the vast mystery of the cosmos. Every tradition offers its adherents a path to experiencing this spiritual communion, however clouded and obscured this path may have become.

It is on this mystical plane that the vast differences between the world's religions—particularly between Western and Eastern religions—begin to dissolve. Whether you are seeking enlightenment or striving to enter the kingdom of God, the same ultimate reality is your goal, and the world's spiritual traditions offer surprisingly similar approaches to, methods for and insights into the journey.

Having spent most of my life as both an aspiring Christian and an aspiring Yogi, I know firsthand that underneath the rituals and doctines of these two traditions is an essential wisdom about the Divine presence. Because neither Christianity nor Yoga, especially as they are commonly taught in the West, turns its mystical face to the outside world, most people don't understand either as a tradition nurturing an internal and mystical approach to spirituality. And yet that mystical core is certainly present in both.

Christianity actually began as a mystical sect in Judaism. We should never forget that Jesus was essentially a Jewish mystic, although it is his prophetic, political and social voice that has most been emphasized. Over time, however, an institutional superstructure grew up around the new religion, leading to the formation of doctrines and formal practices designed more to engender

faith and loyalty than personal communion through direct mystical experience with the Divine.

In the third and fourth centuries following the death of Jesus, many extraordinary men and women were disillusioned with what by then had become the worldly power and external religiosity of institutional Christianity, which is what happens in any tradition when the mystical dimension is underplayed. They withdrew into the remote caves of the Egyptian desert to practice an interior Christianity based on contemplation and prayer, and they sought an inner experience, a spiritual awareness of Jesus's presence and God's true nature. Going against the status quo, they refused to be associated with the Christian power consolidated by the first Christian emperor, Constantine. In this sense, they emulated Jesus, who himself refused to be associated with worldly power: "My kingdom is not of this world" is what he said to Pilate, despite the fact that saying something else could have prevented his death.

While in the first three centuries after Jesus it took great courage, deep faith and strong spiritual practice to follow his teachings, it was different under Constantine. Now there were benefits and incentives to being Christian. Constantine's support of Christianity was at least partially motivated by self-interest: he wanted to harness the power of the growing religion to sustain his own political power. He officially declared which texts and beliefs would be considered orthodox Christianity and which would not, all compiled by his delegated officials. While this was certainly an effective way to homogenize a wildly powerful religion abounding in mystical experience and to domesticate its power for political ends, it also suppressed the rich diversity of spiritual thought, variations of mystical experience, and the radical dimensions of Jesus's teachings. This pivotal moment marked the birth of the institutional church, which, at the time, used the infrastructure of the Roman road system and the wealth of the Roman Empire to spread its message to the world.

Reacting strongly to what they now perceived as the spiritual complacency of the institutional church, the desert mystics

took to heart Saint Paul's injunction to "pray always and with all manner of supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18). Often their core spiritual practice was to repeat a single phrase taken from scripture in order to connect directly to the presence of God. This practice developed into the complex, multilevel form of deep contemplative prayer and reading meditation that came to be known as *lectio divina*. The accounts of the spiritual progress and mystical experiences of these disciplined wild men and women, compiled and recorded by John Cassian in the fourth century, became the spiritual classic known as the *Philokalia*. To this day, the *Philokalia* remains a vital resource in the inner life of the Christian monk.

Roughly a thousand years before the Christian desert mystics lived, the Yogis of ancient India found themselves equally disillusioned with the external religion of Brahminical or caste-based

> *Om* is comparable to the chanting of words from scripture that formed the basis of *lectio divina*.

Hinduism. This is why Yoga is often presented as a nonreligion. It is not, however, nonmystical. Like their Egyptian Christian counterparts, these silent Yogis, called *munis*, sought the solitude of caves and forests and mountaintops, where they could spend their time in interior prayer. They rejected the rituals of the Hindu institution, channeling their energies directly toward the Divine presence, rather than through a priest, and offering their breath, their life force in place of the clarified butter and twigs from specific trees characteristic of Hindu rituals. In place of the kunda, or sacrificial fire pit, they offered the crucible of their own hearts and devotion as their fire. Much like the Hebrew prophets, they proclaimed that it was the inner state of mind and heart that was important, not the external, sacrificial offerings.

These Indian Yogis had much in common with the Chris-

tian mystics who would follow them. Like the desert fathers and mothers of mystical Christianity, they rebelled against institutional religion and sought direct personal experience of the Divine. The most intriguing parallel, however, was that the two groups of mystics developed very similar techniques for bringing themselves closer to the Divine presence. The Yogis' repeated use of the mantra, most commonly the sacred syllable *Om*, is comparable to the chanting of words from scripture that formed the basis of *lectio divina*. And the two were used to bring about similar changes in awareness and consciousness.

It is possible that the mantra method was propagated by those passing along the active trade routes of the ancient world, a means by which many similar practices were exchanged between India and Greece and throughout the Middle East, most notably between India and Alexandria in Egypt. This may have been how the early Christian mystics came to know of the technique.

The early mystics of the Egyptian desert weren't the only Christians to seek union with the Divine through prayer techniques very similar to ones that had arisen much earlier in India. In the Byzantine Empire, about the time that the Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in 313, there developed a mystical and monastic sect whose practitioners came to be called Hesychasts, after a word that meant "stillness" or "tranquility." They used what was essentially mantra meditation as their fundamental means of spiritual development. Hesychasm underwent a renaissance in the early 1300s, becoming a major force in the Eastern Orthodox Church. By this time, some Hesychast monks had developed elaborate and powerful techniques for attaining union with God. They combined prayer and meditation with controlled breathing and particular bodily positions—practices very similar to those of Yoga.

Instructing others in how to employ these techniques, a Hesychast monk named Nicephorus the Solitary wrote, in the 1200s, a passage that sounds similar to the language of many esoteric Yoga texts:

> You know, brother, how we breathe: we breathe the air in and out. On this is based the life of the body and on this depends its warmth. So, sitting down in your cell, collect your mind and lead it into the path of the breath along which the air enters in. Constrain it to enter the heart, together with the inhaled air, and keep it there. Keep it there and do not leave it silent and idle. Instead, give it the following prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me." Let this be the mind's constant occupation, never to be abandoned.

At Shantivanam, we followed in the footsteps of all the Eastern and Western mystics who had walked this common path toward union with the Divine. We entered deep meditative states by focusing on repeated phrases and the movement of air into and out of our bodies. Although the form of our practice came from the Benedictine tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, its goal and essence were universal. An early Christian mystic, a Hesychast monk or an esoteric Yogi would have recognized immediately what we monks were doing.

Our practice of contemplative prayer was based on the *lectio divina*. As I mentioned earlier, the *lectio divina* is a form of spiritual reading-meditation with ancient roots. It was advocated as a core spiritual practice by Saint Benedict (480 to 547 CE), the founder of the Rule of Saint Benedict, under which Shantivanam operated.

Christian monks in the Middle Ages called their method *lectio divina*, the "four senses of scripture," because they had determined that there were different levels of listening to the same passage. These resonate with the dynamics of mantra practice: one experiences the external audible sound (*vaikari*); then the mental interpretation (*madhyama*); the telepathic resonance of deep understanding (*pashyanti*); and finally union with the supreme state of Divine presence and Divine mind (*para*). *Lectio* is the literal interpretation of a text, the historical context. This is like *vaikari*, the external resonance of a mantra. However, when seek-

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ing to apply this scriptural passage in our life, we attain a moral understanding of it. This is known as *meditatio*. In mantra practice, *madhyama* is the intermediate process of thought translating into action and vice versa. *Oratio*, the third variation of *lectio divina*, happens when, after constant application, we start to naturally live the teaching that is contained within the scriptural passage we have been meditating upon. There is no longer a conscious effort involved. This is what Gandhi advocated and what many Christian monks and saints practiced, as do many Christians even today. This state corresponds to the implicit and universal state of thought resonance. Good people in all cultures operate from this place, and in mantra practice this corresponds to *pashyanti*. Finally, there is the breakthrough into the state of conscious union with God that the Christian monastic tradition calls *contempatio* and the mantric tradition refers to as *para*. This ultimate state of conscious union is called *Samadhi* in the Yoga tradition.

Samadhi is not a state that can be produced; it is, rather, a state of grace that we enter when we let go of all else and surrender to the deepest sense of presence (or awareness) within us, which is the supreme presence of the Divine. We are created in the image and likeness of the Divine, and we realize it when a deep inner harmony is established within us. This harmony is Yoga and we prepare for it by becoming aware of stillness in the mind and through this stillness, consciously entering into loving communion with the Divine. Christian mystics refer to this experience as being "seized" by the Divine presence and Yogis refer to it as "total absorption," which is what the term *Samadhi* means. Both traditions describe this state as one in which all the activity of the mind is suspended so that the mind can become aware of itself, as though looking into a mirror. This transparency allows us to behold a deeper reality, the God that we share. It is, in a manner of speaking, an act of coming face-to-face with God. This involves a formless nakedness in which we experience ourselves in the intimacy of God's presence.

The contemplative *lectio divina* is the essential work of the Benedictine monk, the most important part of the harmonious

blend of work, study, and prayer that supports the contemplative life. The ashram I studied in followed this ideal, and Bede Griffiths repeatedly emphasized that the two hour-long periods for contemplative prayer each day (5:20 a.m. to 6:20 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) were the pillars that held up our monastic lives. Setting an example, Bede faithfully practiced each day at the appointed hours.

Early on in my time at Shantivanam, Bede suggested that I practice a particular method of contemplative prayer intended to bring a person into the intimacy of contemplation as quickly as possible. The method is simple but by no means easy. You repeat a sacred phrase lovingly, over and over, like calling out to the beloved. This focuses the mind, challenging it to maintain a

> Contemplative practice and experience will, in turn, nurture a spirit of peace and compassion among the peoples of the earth.

single, unified thought pattern, that flows continuously toward the Divine like a river returning to its source in the ocean. The sacred phrase, which acts like a mantra, becomes a sort of pipeline between the Divine and the human soul. Gradually the pipeline dissolves, revealing the pure union that exists eternally between the soul and its source. In other words, there is no longer any subject-object relationship, only the merging of energies into a simple union. In method and goal, this is identical to the tradition of the mantra.

Bede had me follow the instructions outlined in *A Method of Contemplative Prayer*, an obscure but succinct little book written by Father James Borst, to learn this method of meditation. Borst advocated that one do nothing more for the entire period of meditation than sit still and repeat the mantra or sacred phrase.

He recommended the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." This is known as the Jesus prayer. Alternatively, "Lord, come to my aid; God, make haste to help me" could also be used. Both of these phrases were traditional mantras of the Eastern Church, used since the time of the desert fathers and mothers.

Each morning at 5:20, I would sit down for a quiet hour in the darkness under my mosquito net and recite the full form of the Jesus prayer in English: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Additionally, I used, "Lord, come to my aid; God, make haste to help me." I used both these contemplative prayer phrases only for a very short period, however. As soon as I realized the power of Sanskrit, I practiced meditation with two Christian Sanskrit mantras that were derived from these traditional phrases, but without the references to sin and mercy. To be true to the Hindu culture in which we immersed ourselves at the ashram, I tried to sit cross-legged, but it was diffiuclt to do for a long period as I was not used to the posture. Whenever my knees hurt, I would prop my legs up for a bit, during which time I continued to say the prayer.

At first, I struggled through the entire hour. The problem was not my knees, but my mind: it just went on and on and simply would not stop. More importantly, I didn't feel anything spiritual while saying the mantra. There was no glorious light, no apparitions, no angelic music, nothing—just the labor of saying the same phrase repeatedly. Nevertheless, I was able to continue with what seemed a dry and boring practice—perhaps as a musician I had had to discipline myself to repeat the same musical phrase until I got it right. The big difference here was that there was nothing to "get right."

Slowly, I learned that contemplative prayer is a labor of love, a heartfelt response to the invitation of Spirit calling to us from our depths. Contemplative prayer is a way of reaching within to this invisible dimension of our being, and in this act we discover ourselves loving and being loved at a level and in a manner that

is beyond the ability of our conceptual minds to articulate, and far more simple and direct than the love we experience through our psyches. In contemplative prayer, we learn to say the mantra not because it produces some wonderful spiritual effects but because it affirms a fundamental love relationship that is already present at the very core of our being and at the heart of all creation. Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk who inspires the practice of contemplative prayer (as centering prayer) among Christians worldwide today, eloquently describes the repetition of the mantra as an act of intention, the choice of the will to open and surrender to God's presence, rather than an act of attention.

Russill Paul trained as both a Christian monk and yogi under the direction of Bede Griffiths. He is a faculty member at Wisdom University in San Francisco, CA. He lives in Texas and teaches throughout the world. Excerpted from *Jesus in the Lotus: The Mystical Doorway between Christianity and Yogic Spirituality.* © www.newworldlbrary.com

When The Dark Pearl Sky

MICHAEL S. MORRIS

In the early morning
when the dark pearl sky
whispers into my ears

And fluttering, eyes
reawaken, and the mind
circles the ceiling

And walls, attempting
to recall, one by one,
the clouds up above

Must be gathering rain
seeing dark under-bellies;
but then the silver rays

And the birds singing
recall me to the sun
invisibly out there

Somewhere behind veils
somewhere beyond us
calling for our songs

Michael Morris is an award winning writer and author of two novels, a book of short stories, and nine collections of poetry. His writting has appeared in over fifty-five literary journals, littles, and anthologies. Michael lives in Sonoma, CA.

Morning Kiss

KENNETH O'KEEFE

The flaming pink-red palm of morning sky
Stretches whitening finger-beams of light,
That peel away the shelling husk of night.
A breeze awakes the leaves of trees, who sigh
As yawning limbs release the flocks to rise
And fill the bluing dome with blithesome flight.
Soon frost retreats like children, who in sight
Of strangers suddenly become quite shy.

The kindled earth with green unfolding leaf,
These singing beaks and sweeps of bracing wings—
All this restores my trust that nothing is amiss.

As ocean warmth cradles a coral reef,
A lustrous bliss, while plucking my heartstrings,
Has sealed upon my soul this morning's kiss.

Kenneth O'Keefe is a retired special needs teacher. Since leaving this gratifying work he has been afforded the solitude to pursue another great love of his, writing.

Basilica

JAMES M. DAVIS

I push the stout oak door
And slip in under the oval dome.
Silence summons me in.
Muffled echoes brood over the stone
And under the pews offering
Neither text nor tune nor shaft of light
But mute all until even waiting falls away.
The silence inhales me into itself.

A pilgrim enters from the back;
His footsteps echo inside me.
He prostrates himself on the floor.
The flagstone is cold against my forehead.

James Davis is an innkeeper, beekeeper, carpenter, cook. He performs weddings and writes poetry in the mountains of North Carolina near Asheville. He can be reached at info@hawkandivy.com

Lotus

JOANNA LAI

So long, so quiet, so calm is today's night, with a soft breeze in the air there blows a sweet scent of freshness, so strange, but so familiar; so far, yet so near. One dew from heaven and the lake awakes from eternal depth of darkness.

When the moon rises to its highest and drops a tear stealingly, a droplet of peal hath recalled the secret memory of the sea unconsciously. In th' tender movement of the vortex doth the moon dew melt into the mundi of forever paradise. Two become one, and will behold in each other's embrace everlastingly.

Then as the leaf withers and the moon shatters its light on a lower ground. The lake breathes and a white lotus ascends to the surface of the water. Without disturbing the nature, the lotus gently glimmers its brightest aura. Yet, in an unknown way. Nature is returning to its utmost form and begins to transform the world into another gyre.

Born in Hong Kong, Joanna Lai majored in English Literature at the Hong Kong Baptist University (Hong Kong), the University of Durham (UK), and is a lifestyle journalist for a local English newspaper. Joanna is now in pursuit of spiritual wisdom. Holding the belief of "All is One," she is especially interested in energy healing, Celtic Spirituality and Native American Shamanism.

Not Your Garden Variety Faith Experience

On April 26, 2009 over one hundred youth from various schools and religious congregations across Central Jersey gathered to create a community garden at Rivera Elementary School in Trenton. This event was part of a national campaign initiated by Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago to pair community service with interfaith dialogue, highlighting shared religious values while building relationships of mutual respect across theological differences, and preparing young people to assume leadership in a pluralistic world at a time of global crisis. Eboo Patel, founder of Interfaith Youth Core, author of Acts of Faith *and recent Obama appointee to the Committee on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, spoke to area youth leaders prior to the event, challenging them to imagine and then create a future in which religious pluralism and peace co-exist and even flourish. Co-sponsors included Fellowship in Prayer, The Office of Religious Life and the Religious Life Council of Princeton University, The Institute of Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary and The Interfaith Youth Core. Following are the thoughts and reflections of two of the participants.*

CATHERINE HUBER

Recently, I was given the opportunity to help plan and participate in a day of interfaith youth service. The event sounded wonderful, but I was hesitant to join a group where I knew no one. I was positive that our diverse religions, schools and ages would keep the day's intentions of interfaith dialogue from being a success. However, despite my concerns, I agreed to meet with the committee and immediately I was proved wrong. Every person I met on the planning committee and at the event was genuinely interested in learning about me and my religion. This was a great relief and made the experience invaluable.

We had several meetings in preparation for our garden planting service project during which we discussed the challenges we would face in creating an open dialogue, as well as the logistics for the event. We considered every detail, from location, attire and food to nametags, tools and scheduling. Over several weeks, I came to know many of the group members and quickly learned to respect their opinions and religions. One of the most eye-opening parts of the experience for me was the realization that dietary needs that had to be accommodated for our diverse group. As a Catholic, my religion does not restrict my diet, so I had never considered that other religious traditions would impose dietary restrictions, such as prohibiting cheese and certain types of meat. While I loved the idea of this day of community service, I was initially unaware of its origin. Through the meetings, I learned the idea was based on Eboo Patel's philosophy that young people are best able to overcome religious differences through community service. In conjunction with this event, Dr. Patel spoke at Princeton University. Listening, I quickly understood the impact that Interfaith Youth Service had had in other communities. I learned about the symbolism of gardens in other religions. I have always known about the significance of the Garden of Eden in Catholicism, but I was fascinated to discover the importance of the Lotus flower in the Hindu religion as self-purifying and grounded in faith.

The day of service arrived and as I pulled into the school, I was amazed at the number of people our small group had brought together. The unity gained from this service project was evident even from afar due to our matching T-Shirts! Groups of people spoke openly about their religion while planting a vegetable garden, scraping and painting an old, wrought iron fence, and turning an old sandbox into a beautiful flower bed. I learned where my "co-workers" came from and what brought them to participate in this event. Each detail were touching. At dinner, a representative from each religion read a prayer traditional to that faith. I was amazed at the commonalities among the blessings. Each stressed faith, peace and respect. The questions we discussed over dinner also evoked conversations about society's perception of religion and the reality behind the stereotypical views. I was thrilled to find an environment in which open debate and consideration of religion were welcome. However, the most significant part of my day was viewing our completed flower and vegatable gardens. We toured around the job site, visiting each aspect of our endeavor. This leads me to what perhaps ended up to be the most eloquent conversation of the day. It did not involve faith, religion, background, hometown or race, but simply the truest effect of what we had accomplished that day. As Dean Paul Raushenbush from Princeton University spoke about the flower beds that we had planted, a younger boy who was a student at the school, quietly asked, "What do you mean when you say 'bed'?" I realized then, that what we had done far exceeded bringing young people of different faiths together or creating a more beautiful environment for the school, but we were directly touching the lives of those who live and attend school where we worked that day.

Catherine Huber, of Pennington, New Jersey, is a rising sophomore at Stuart Country Day School in Princeton, NJ. She is an active member of her parish youth group, the CRASH Club, Stuart's Student Government and enjoys tennis, golf and politics.

RAHUL SUBRAMANIAM

The Day of Interfaith Youth Service forced me to think about the role of service in my life. I believe that service is about selflessness. It is about setting aside personal desires and working for someone else. To me, the height of selflessness is not expecting anything in return, or serving others only for the sake of benefitting them. A selfless task is its own reward. Or rather, the reward is seeing the satisfaction on the faces of those who directly benefit. In our case, the beneficiaries were the students of the elementary school for which we were constructing a garden.

The participants in the Day of Interfaith Service definitely had this selfless spirit. Few were in it for personal glory or recognition. Selflessness helped us undergo physically difficult labor, because we thought less about our aching muscles and sweating brows than about the garden we were helping to create. All were satisfied with their stations. Several students shoveled topsoil into wheelbarrows, which would then be shuttled to the garden beds. There, two participants would gently tilt the wheelbarrow toward the bed while numerous shovels and hoes scattered and spread the nutritious dirt evenly across the earth. The coordination was masterful. Because of selflessness, the work was of high quality.

It was not being forced upon us; instead, it came from something within every student that impelled him to do good work.

Why do humans feel this impulse to do good for each other? Every religion mentions selfless service as a component of a well-lived life. That is because all religions deal with setting aside our individual needs and thinking on behalf of our family, friends, community, nature and world. To serve is to live the Golden Rule, a principle found in similar forms around the world. Because of their importance in all traditions, service projects are essential catalysts to building interfaith understanding and cooperation. During our garden creation, I did not differentiate a practitioner of one religion from another. We were all growing in compassion and consciousness. Theological differences had little room in an activity that involved humans helping humans. As Eboo Patel noted, our various conceptions of heaven do not have to prevent us from coming together to make a better earth.

Rahul Subramaniam is a rising junior majoring in polotics at Princeton University. In addition to interfaith work, he is interested in spirituality, international relations, and development. In the future, he wishes to apply his love for both religion and politics as a United Nations official.

Defining Our Spirit

JOHN NARDONE

Our spirit is that indefinable something that makes us who we are.
It is what keeps us together in bad times,
And grounded in good times.
It is the quality that lets us marvel at the incredible beauty around us every day,
And keeps us from being destroyed by the cruelty and horror that exists in the world.

Our spirit is our link to the mystical center of the universe.
That part of us that is fulfilled in the sense of oneness of all creation.
That part of us that recognizes all living things are connected,
And need each other.
Our spirit has understanding beyond understanding,
A sense of belonging beyond words.

Our spirit is the voice inside us that reminds us we are not alone,
Not abandoned.
It understands,
More than our minds can ever hope to understand,
The depth of God's love for us.
It is the best part of ourselves.
It is always content,
Always secure,
Never frightened.

Our spirit knows where we belong in the universe
Knows we are part of a plan
Not an accident.
We can look to the spirit within us for guidance, for help.

If we follow what feels right for our spirit,
We will never go far wrong.

Our spirit always sees clearly
And if we look to our spirit for help,
We will not be turned away.

It is ironic that we spend our lives searching for answers,
Searching for the meaning of life.
When the answer is within us.
We have always known what life means and why we are here.
We just don't always remember where to look.

John Nardone is retired from the State of NJ and lives with his significant other in a small town in Southern NJ. His hobby is photography, in particular, capturing the subtle beauty of the NJ Pinelands and Delaware Bay. He is active in Environmental and Historical organizations.

Walking Meditation Is Wonderful

AJAHN BRAHMAVAMSO

Walking Meditation is wonderful, especially in the early morning. Often when you get up early, you're quite tired and the mind isn't bright. One of the advantages of walking meditation is that you can't nod off while you are walking.

Choose a clear, straight path between twenty to thirty paces long. This can be a corridor in a house, a path in a garden or just a track on the grass. Use whatever is available even if it's a bit less than twenty paces long. If it's comfortable to do so, walk without shoes, enjoying the contact of your bare feet on the ground.

Stand at one end of your path. Compose the mind. Relax the body and begin walking. Walk back and forth at a pace that seems natural to you. While you are walking, clasp your hands comfortably in front of you and rest your gaze on the ground about two meters ahead. Be careful not to look around if you are doing walking meditation because that would be distracting.

The first four stages of breath meditation apply here as well. But in walking meditation attention eventually comes to rest on the feet rather than the breath.

At first, aim to develop the first stage of present-moment awareness, giving up the baggage of the past and future. Reach the state of just walking, easily, in the here and now. When you feel you have settled into the present moment, where thoughts concerning the past and future are absent from the mind, then aim to develop the second stage of silent walking in the present moment. Gradually let go of all thinking, let go of the inner commentary. Walk without any inner speech. Develop silent awareness of the present- moment. Make use of techniques such as watching every movement very closely, so that you don't have the time to comment about what has just happened, and attending to the space between thoughts.

Once the inner commentary has slowed to a bare trickle of inner speech, deliberately focus your attention on the feeling of movement in the feet and lower legs. Do so to the extent that you clearly notice every step on the path. Know every left step and every right step—one after the other without missing any. Know every step as you turn around at the end of the path. The famous Chinese saying that "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" is helpful here. Such a journey is in fact only one step long—the step that you are walking now. So just be silently aware of this "one step," and let everything else go. When you have completed ten return trips up and down the path without missing a single left or right step then you have fulfilled the third stage of the walking meditation—silent present-moment awareness of walking.

Now increase the attention so that you notice every feeling of movement in the left step, from the very beginning when the left step starts to move and lift up from the ground. Notice as it goes up, forward, down and then rests on the ground again, taking the weight of the body. Develop this continuous awareness of the left step, and then similar smooth, unbroken awareness of the right step. Do this throughout every step to the end of the path. And as you turn around, notice every feeling in the turning—around procedure, not missing a movement.

When you can walk fifteen minutes comfortably sustaining the attention on every moment of walking, without a single break, then you have reached the fourth stage of full sustained awareness of walking. At this point the process of walking so fully occupies the attention that the mind cannot be distracted. You know when this happens, because the mind goes into the state of samadhi, or attentive stillness, and becomes very peaceful.

Even the sound of the birds disappears as your attention is fully focused on the experience of walking. Your attention is easily settled, content and sustained on one thing. You will find this a very pleasant experience indeed.

As your mindfulness increases, you will know more and more the sensation of walking. Then you will find that walking has a

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deep sense of beauty and peace to it and every step becomes a "beautiful step." And it can very easily absorb all your attention as you become fascinated by just walking. You can receive a great deal of *samádhi* through walking meditation in this way. That *samádhi* is experienced as peacefulness, a sense of stillnes, a sense of the mind being very comfortable and very happy in its own corner.

I hope you experience this peacefulness for yourself when you try walking meditation. Many people who practice walking meditation for the first time say, "This is amazing. Beautiful." Just slowing down gives you a sense of peace. You become calm just by watching the sensations as you walk.

Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso is the abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery in Western Australia. He is a popular meditation teacher and author of *Mindfulness, Bliss & Beyond*; Wisdom Publications. Excerpted from *Walking Meditation* © 2007 Buddhist Publication Society Inc. and used with permission.

The Journey
Photos and Meditations for the Hungry Soul

BY KATHY J. NELSON
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The Journey: Photos and Meditations for the Hungry Soul is a book that invites readers to partake in a veritable spiritual feast with "food for reflection" from around the world. Her words and images are simple and powerful. It is a book to be visited again and again because different insights and meaning can be discovered each time.

In the preface, Kathy writes, "The practice of meditation has been taught in many ways through various teachers: gurus, monks, pastors, rabbi and yogis. Each of the major religions encourages the faithful to listen and wait upon the divine. This book places in one's hands images of the world and meditative thoughts in order to open the human soul to the mysteries of the divine that come from studied meditation on the world around us, and the practice of silencing one's self in an effort to listen to the divine's still small voice."

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If you have already remembered Fellowship in Prayer in your estate plans, please notify us. We would welcome the opportunity to express our appreciation to you now and to add your name to our list of Legacy Donors.

A Moment Through Time

JAMES W. DONNELLY

As I roll myself out of bed each morning and sit with my feet on the floor, it's not unusual for me to take a meditative moment to marvel at the regularity in life. This fleeting moment does not involve a cerebral wonder at the earth's rotation nor does it involve a more mundane consideration about what the new day has in store for me. If anything, it's more an acknowledgement of my getting older and the simple acceptance that this happens one day at a time, measured by putting my feet on the floor each day.

One morning last week, however, as I sat with my feet on the floor, I had a new feeling—a surprising sense of being at one with all of those who had lived before me, sitting at the edge of their beds, feet on the floor, ready for a new day—a feeling of being warped into a simultaneous sequence of moments—a shadowy link, at one with all generations from the beginning of time and then with those that would look back centuries from now at where I sat—all participating together in the ritual of starting a new day, all with feet on the floor, being at one with what are now our ancestors—just as we will be for those who follow—sharing together this moment in time.

James W. Donnelly is active as a Stephen Minister in his church. He is also a Spiritual Guide and appreciates the value of spiritual journaling. James lives with his wife near Annapolis, MD, where he sings with the county's Arundel Vocal Arts Society and is active with the county's Board of Education scholarship program.

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